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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6977
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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 4032
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1172
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1944
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6799
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7781
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5112
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0301
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2601
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 0892
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 3242
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 4718
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 1395
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 3622
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000709

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: REFUGEE TRIPARTITE MEETING ANNOUNCES CLOSURES,
INCENTIVES, ASKS FOR HELP

REF: A. DOHERTY/AMLIN/AGUILAR E-MAIL (WITH UNHCR

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS) OF 12 FEB 07

[1](#)B. DOHERTY/HOOVER/AMLIN E-MAIL OF 8 FEB 07

[1](#)C. ISLAMABAD 629

[1](#)D. ISLAMABAD 526

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) On February 7, participants of the 12th Refugee Tripartite Commission announced their decision to close four Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan in 2007. Scheduled in two phases, the closures will affect over 240,000 of Pakistan's estimated 2.4 million Afghan refugees. The Government of Pakistan pledged to contribute USD 5 million to increase repatriation packages from USD 60 to USD 100 per person. Pakistani, Afghan, and UNHCR Tripartite representatives appealed to the international community to provide additional financial support to encourage repatriations. End Summary.

Phased Closures Scheduled, Added Benefits Promised

[1](#)2. (U) On February 7, the Refugee Tripartite Commission confirmed publicly what Pakistani government officials had told us privately: in 2007, the Government of Pakistan will close four Afghan refugee camps in two phases. In total, the closures will affect approximately 10 percent of Pakistan's refugee population. The first phase (closure of Katchagari camp and Jungle Pir Alozai camp) will affect approximately 90,000 refugees and begin on April 15. The second phase (closure of Jalozei camp and Girdi Jungle camp) will affect approximately 152,000 refugees and begin on June 15. UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan plan to relocate those not wishing to repatriate to other camps in Pakistan.

¶3. (U) To encourage increased repatriations, Pakistan pledged its intent to contribute USD 5 million to increase repatriation packages from USD 60 to USD 100. Also, the Commission agreed to a six-week grace period for refugees without Proof of Registration cards who still would like assistance in returning to Afghanistan. (Note: UNHCR estimates that 2.2 of the 2.4 million refugees will be registered by the end of the registration period on February ¶15. End Note.)

Commission Asks Donors For More Assistance

¶4. (U) After the Commission meeting, UNHCR invited the diplomatic community in Islamabad for a summary of the Commission's recommendations and a question/answer period. All Commission representatives appealed to the donor community to find additional funding to encourage returns, emphasizing that increased repatriation packages are only part of the solution. UNHCR handed out statistics from its March 2005 census, which revealed that 64 percent of Afghan refugees still living in camps stated that "lack of shelter" is the most important reason why they do not intend to return to Afghanistan. "Lack of a livelihood" in Afghanistan (18.2 percent) and "lack of security" (17.8 percent) were the second and third most important reasons.

¶5. (U) The Afghan representative announced his government's intention to increase the number of its proposed development townships from 50 - 100 and he appealed to the international community to help build vocational centers, schools, hospitals, transport networks and shelters.

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Important's First Steps Taken: More Needed

¶6. (C) Comment: The Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan took an important first step together in their agreement for camp closures and their appeal to the international community for help in encouraging Afghan refugees to go home. With the announcements out of the way, the hard work of logistical planning for the movement of 241,000 people affected by the closures needs to begin. The broad concept, provided in ref A, is a start, but if the process is poorly managed it could create even more security concerns -- from disgruntled refugees and extremists alike. Pakistani officials at multiple levels have privately told poloffs that Afghan refugees will not be given the option to relocate within Pakistan. These statements may be more reflective of hard-line talking points intended to persuade the international community of Islamabad's resolve than actual Government of Pakistan policy, but neither interpretation bodes well for a genuine planning process.

¶7. (C) Most Afghan refugees living in Pakistan have done so for most of their lives -- the vast majority of the remaining refugee population originally arrived before 1985. Many will no doubt remain, especially since many know no other home and those living in or near urban areas (like the 54,000 refugees who live in Katchagari) have better access to job opportunities in Pakistan than they would in their remote agricultural districts in Afghanistan. Post has heard that refugees anticipating camp closures are already starting to buy land some distance away from the camps expecting to relocate within Pakistan -- not repatriate to Afghanistan.

¶8. (C) To convince the Afghan refugees to return home, the international community will need to demonstrate that security, shelter, and a livelihood are waiting for them on the other side of the border. With an expected Taliban spring offensive looming and no repatriation-focused assistance commitments yet in sight, it will be a difficult sell for the

spring. End Comment.
BODDE